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## PUBLIC STATEMENT

### SOUTH KOREA

#### GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL WILL SET UP A WEAK NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION WITHOUT PROPER CONSULTATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

*As dozens of South Korean human rights activists stage a hunger strike in central Seoul, Amnesty International has written to President Kim Dae-jung urging him to consult civil society before agreeing on controversial new legislation to set up a national human rights commission.*

*Members of 18 human rights groups are currently on hunger strike at Myongdong Cathedral in protest at their exclusion from discussions on the establishment of the commission and the content of the proposed legislation to set it up. A draft law, agreed in mid-March by the Ministry of Justice and the ruling party, is likely to be submitted to the National Assembly this month, without proper consultation with South Korean human rights organizations and experts.*

*Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed its concern that discussions on the establishment of the new commission have been dominated*

by the Ministry of Justice which has sought to minimize its powers. The government's new draft legislation seems designed to set up a commission which lacks independence and has weak investigative powers over a limited range of violations.

Amnesty International has warned the government that a commission established without proper consultation is likely to be ineffective because it does not have the support of civil society. The organization also believes that the process for establishing the new commission has demonstrated a lack of transparency on the government's part.

In her letter, Amnesty International's Deputy Secretary General called for an assurance that the new commission will be established in full conformity with international human rights standards and that it will be fully independent of the Ministry of Justice. The current proposal seems destined to create a weak and ineffective institution which does little to enhance human rights protection in South Korea and will not win the support of the international community.

ENDS.../